

Discourse Studies

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Response Paper I: Discourses and social languages (J. P. Gee)

The Gee's text is a introductory work about some, or better initial concepts, in his definition of 'Discourses', that is, "different ways in which in which humans integrate language with non-language 'stuff'". With simple words and several examples, the author seemed to show his ideas in uncomplicated and direct to his readers, even if we consider that is a scientific subject matter to a specific and scientific public, generally undergraduate, and maybe, postgraduate.

Thinking about 'situated identities', the first point that caught my attention, but more related with the problem of recognition and being recognized, reminds me Stuart Hall's quote:

The subject, previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities. Correspondingly, the identities which composed the social landscapes 'out there', and which ensured ow subjective conformity with the objective 'needs' of the culture, are breaking up as in result of structural and institutional change. The very process of identification, through which we project ourselves into our cultural identities, has become more open-ended, variable and problematic. (HALL, 1990)

As a "Linguistic & Literature' undergraduate the society: family, friends and coworkers wait that I me express only academic or that I've read all classics books, and the expectations increase when people see me as a 'Linguistic & Literature' undergraduate at Universidade de São Paulo, mostly see me, among others things, as a super intelligent and erudit. I suppose to mean that a person with this specific characteristics is not allow to commit any mistake when make discourse, speaking or writing. In the same way that everybody has different identities or social positions including different styles of language, I question what is the problem with some people accept that everybody, indepent of occupations, has different ways to integrate language with the other activities and values, or better, what the problem with the multiple identities? It is clear that it is a simple example of my reality, but other people suffer the similar situation accordly the occupations that have chosen. It

sound like a specific identity does not coexist with others, because of the stereotyped sense.

Considering Gee's central idea the Discourses of a integration with the other stuffs, the various contexts that we are exposed everytime and everywhere, a particular situation to think about it happened during a literature class couple years ago. A professor at USP teaching a class about a short story with the following plot: a professor who rape and murder a woman, and to base his arguments concerning abuse, violence and feminicide he brought statistics numbers from a trustworthy institute in Brazil that support women in this conditions. But, for using the term 'prefer' when he explained that women do not report the cases, a woman student, did not like and feels battered with this specific term. After, this student posted in Facebook, in a group of "Letras-USP", how she felt uncomfortable with this situation, because when she tried emphatically pointed against the professor that women simply not prefer being abused. The confusion intensity when some commentaries judging the professor as a misogynistic, principally because she did not explain all the context in the class, how text was studied and the discussions involving the statistic numbers and the classmate's arguments. So, the next class after this problematic situation, the students discuss several points take into account the hierarchical relationship between professors and students, and how term rather than 'prefer' should be used, even we are "Letras" undergraduate.

Examining the whole extreme tense situation it is understandable when the context, or the professor's Discourses, is not took in consideration in the classroom. Today is complicated to deal with problematic and needed questions, like the causes of women, but using the Gee's words: "in the 'informal' case, 'context' determines meaning and you just have to have been there to understand what was being said", in relation with decontextualized people in Facebook post. The 'Conversations' marked by J. P. Gee can be also related here because among Discourses and could be interpreted in other hand of the student posture. She probably identify the professor characteristics as a particular side, in a unified and stable identity: a white older man in a hierarchical position, which patriarchally represents specific values and ways of thinking that symbolizes a discourse of oppression, to constituting the debate that he was planned to do.

The two examples that I quickly exposed, however different they may be, reveal a similarity: the expectations, justified or not, about the image we pass and those we also make about others, and how they are so intrinsic to values and symbols attached to identity, and how these identities necessarily pass through not only through our language, but through the Discourses, that are not 'units' with clear boundaries, that we produce while living as a society. To conclude, the definitions of discourse/Discourse reflects in the position of Gee about how we view language and language learning, likely to criticize text-based teaching standards, highlighting the superiority of conversation and meaning to the detriment of normative grammar. Considering me as a future teacher, because in addition to outlining the rules and mechanisms of language, my work will not be effective if all other aspects, the 'other stuffs', in social relations that based in multiple and variable identities are not taken into account.